



Hercules And Love Affair

1978 was a pivotal year in the evolution of dance music. *Saturday Night Fever* had hijacked disco from the gay, black and Latino underground scene and turned it into a strutting global pop phenomenon spurring DJs like Frankie Knuckles in Chicago and Larry Levan in New York to push the expansive, electronic dreams of Giorgio Moroder (*I Feel Love*) and Walter Gibbons (*Ten Percent*) towards what would eventually become House and Garage.

1978 was also the year that Andy Butler was born. Exactly 30 years later, with a little help from his vocalist friends Antony (of Antony and the Johnsons), Kim Ann Foxman and Nomi, Andy is reviving the spirit of real disco and the house sounds it spawned with enough passion and finesse to ignite both the underground and the pop world all over again.

In its name, sound and romantic, heroic spirit, Hercules And Love Affair is the result of Andy's dedication to the Classics: both the myths and legends of Ancient Greece and Rome that captured his imagination as a child, and the timeless club tracks that soundtracked the euphoria and delirium of his adolescence and adult life.

Born in Denver, Colorado, Andy was already composing modern classical pieces on the family piano when, aged 12, he had his first mind-blowing encounter with electronic dance music in the shape of Yazoo's 1982 Vince Clarke produced b-side *Situation*. It changed his life: "The delayed synth hook made me crazy and Alison Moyet's deep voice made me crazier. I figured that was what music in heaven sounded like. It made my hair stand on end."

Inspired to share his new musical passion, at 15 Andy got a DJing gig in a gay bar and soon encountered DJ Garth of Wicked Crew, a San Francisco-based soundsystem set up by Brit ex-pat members of DJ Harvey & co's legendary London rave collective, Tonka Soundsystem. "I was used to hearing DJs matching beats and playing good music of the moment, but Wicked would drop totally unexpected things, records that most DJs wouldn't dare to play. Garth was fearless, he could get away with it, it just worked. I became a Wicked groupie."

At 18, Andy followed his head and his heart and left Denver to study music and art history at the private liberal Sarah Lawrence College in Manhattan and applied nocturnal mischief at New York's innumerable nightclubs. His first studio experiments included a Kraftwerk-inspired interpretation of Canadian disco don Gino Soccio's *Runaway* for Rashaun Mitchell, now principal dancer in the Merce Cunningham Dance Company, to perform to.

"During breaks between classes I would investigate this curious shop in Soho which had the weirdest music playing inside, like Telex songs played on the wrong speed and disco versions of Mozart. They sold cassette tape compilations called Smylonylon with really obscure tracklistings written on the inside cover, which I thought was very non-DJ and cool.

"Eventually I had the chance to talk to Chris Brick, the middle aged British man who made the tapes about all of this music he had picked up from thrift stores and flea markets. At the time, these songs were on the fringes of good taste, and valueless for the most part. In retrospect, they were songs that Harvey and other topnotch DJs were playing which would make their value skyrocket a couple of years later. He was encouraging me to find the records and play them because, in his words 'this was your music, your history, this is gay music'".

In 2002 Andy met DJ, singer and jewellery designer Kim Ann Foxman, who having escaped from Hawaii to San Francisco as a teenage tearaway had also fallen under the influence of the Tonka / Wicked Crew DJs eclectic house evangelism. "We totally bonded over music and started going record shopping together," reveals Kim Ann. "He would play me tracks he was working on and I loved everything he made. He captures the feeling of what classic dance music is for us in a really genuine way. His music has emotion, it can be deep and moody, sombre but joyous; it's inspired by memories and music from his past that he is passionate about; it's completely sincere."

Together they formed a loose DJing and promotion partnership, DanceHomosDance. Inspired by London's Horse Meat Disco, Andrew launched Cazzo Pazzo where big name House DJs could show off their disco knowledge in an intimate venue. Kim also got Andy to play at her notorious mixed club night, Mad Clams at The Hole. "I wanted Andy to play because he always played the music I wanted to hear, classic house and disco jams. I didn't really care what the lesbians wanted. But it was always packed and always scandalous."

"Kim knew I was always ready to make some music so she would get me to make special theme songs to go with each night we put on," says Andy. "So that was how we first started collaborating musically."

Among the many club creatures, party people, artists and musicians Andy encountered in the downtown scene was the enigmatic figure of Antony. "After I heard the first Antony and the Johnsons record at a mutual friend's house I had to tell Antony how blown away I was by his voice and the songs he wrote. I said that his music touched me the same way the Cocteau Twins did, he was very flattered. It turned out he was as much of a huge Elizabeth Fraser fan as I was."

Antony himself recalls how the project developed. "He started showing me these skeletal recordings from his computer and we began recording some vocals just as an experiment to pass the days. We recorded the vocal for *Blind* three or four years ago. Then after getting the Mercury Prize [for Antony and the Johnsons' second album *I Am A Bird* in 2005] I suggested to Andy that it might be a great time to do his disco project. That's when we started recording the rest of the tracks. I was dreaming of Blackbox and the way those songs just drive you crazy, fill up your heart and make you want to jump around. It was a fun challenge to push myself and try to generate that kind of energy. With these recordings I'm just along for the thrill of the ride."

Pairing the inherently happy-go-lucky sounds of disco and house with Antony's evocative, far reaching, spirited vocals adds great depth and complexity without diminishing the draw toward the dancefloor. Rarely has club music resonated with such emotionally intensity.

On album opener, *Time Will*, Antony's longing cry rides a sensuous electric bass riff that evokes Frankie Knuckles & Jamie Principle's peerless *Your Love*; on disco-fuelled lead single, *Blind* (now remixed by Frankie himself) and *Raise Me Up* his love for the apocalyptic disco of Savoy Records and the experimental synthpop of Princess Tymmeat becomes clear; and on the tribal, Quaalude-paced *Easy* his multi-layered voice drops several octaves to sound like a Greek Oracle, prophetic and omniscient.

Hercules' third siren (fourth if you include Andy's lead vocals on *This Is My Love*) is Nomi, a sultry 24-year-old native New Yorker who is usually to be found injecting urban sass into Coco Rosie's alt-folk revue and Debbie Harry's latest solo LP or singing her own neo-soul compositions over RZA-inspired minor chord loops.

Citing Mary J, Sade and Lauryn Hill as her vocal inspirations, it's hard to see where she fits into the Hercules mix, but on hearing the punchy Acid House tune *You Belong*, all becomes clear. Her deep, blues tone is a powerful evocation of Yazoo-era Alison Moyet.

"Andy has a way of creating a free bed of rhythm that allows my voice to soar whilst still aware of this underlying mathematical thing that's going on," Nomi explains. "I've learned a lot since I got involved. I've always loved House music, but disco was pretty new to me. I love it now, I can see that it had the same spirit hip hop did when it was first born. It was another brand of rebellious music that was basically saying 'fuck you!' by being super dramatic and ultra femme."

As is so often the case in NYC's linked-in music circle, the final piece of the puzzle was the DFA connection. "My friend (DJ producer) Daniel Wang had been listening to my rough mixes of *Blind* and giving me advice, and when the time came to find a home for the record, he put me in touch with James [Murphy] and Jonathan Galkin."

Blown away by what they heard they offered him a deal and Murphy's LCD Soundsystem partner Tim Goldsworthy swiftly volunteered himself for co-production duties to give a sprinkling of magic LCD dust. Andrew felt it was a great fit: "Tim's longevity as a producer and our shared interest in music history were key to the recording process. He is a truly skilled drum programmer and that coupled with his love for analog instruments definitely helped give the record a deeper authenticity."

And authenticity is the key – both musically and emotionally. This is a record of honesty, beauty, sadness and joy, as Antony explains. "I think the Hercules project just reflects where Andy is at the moment. It seems quite modern to me. It's about feeling good and being free and emotionally awake during this particular time in history. I do think there is a theme in some of Andy's lyrics about being honest and caring for yourself and for the world."

And that's why Hercules And Love Affair will touch you in a way no other record will do in 2008. It encapsulates the high and lows of modern life, references the past but lays a blueprint for what's to come and above all makes your heart beat faster while your soul soars higher.

Hercules & Love Affair are the coolest kids on the block; the future beamed straight to your turntable direct from New York City.

The album HERCULES AND LOVE AFFAIR is released on March 10th on DFA/EMI Records. Live shows will be announced soon.

For further info please contact William Luff on 020 7605 5258/william.luff@emimusic.com

"The most-blessed thing you'll be freaking out to on the dancefloor all next year" –
NME

"Four disco fanatics bringing a much needed glitter glamour revival to a dancefloor near you" – **i-D**

"Deliciously groovesome blend of classic disco, early house and contemporary techno" – **The Guardian**

"A gloriously burnished fusion of 3 decades of classic dance music" – **Mojo**

"If Ziggy Stardust made house music it would sound like this" – **Vogue**

"Classic Chicago house with a modern-day New York vibe" – **The Sun**

"Contemporary New York disco at its best" – **IDJ**

"An intoxicating aural romance" – **Attitude**

"Sexily ambiguous modern disco rumble, bumping the best bits of Chitown House and NY disco into some futurist retro wet dream. It's delicate, haunting, muscular, sweeping and stripped back, all at the same time... to make for a fully debauched early hours extravaganza" – **Update**

"A disco album of serious originality and clout... [including] a towering vocal performance from Antony, who proves himself both as a top-drawer, heart-rending songwriter and a disco diva in the New York grand style. Irresistible." – **FACT**